# Shore Things


## Amnesia at 75 MPH

Early one September morning, I woke up thinking, "What a great Whidbey Island day. I'll drive to Seattle." At 0430 I left the barracks. I stopped at a store, picked up a cup of coffee, and off I went. It looked like it had rained that morning, but the roads were drying, so I didn't give the weather a second thought. I had the radio blaring and didn't have a care in the world.

The speed limit was 70 mph, and I was going about five mph faster than that. Forty-five minutes later, I could see the steel bridge near Arlington. Suddenly, out of nowhere, the infamous Washington rain started coming down. It was raining so hard that I couldn't see the road ahead of me. I was traveling on the inside lane, and as soon as I hit the steel deck of the bridge, I could feel the car break loose and start to drift. I panicked and hit the brakes hard.

I know, we have all seen the test questions and probably read the drivers' handbooks that warn against jumping on the brakes when the road is slick, unless you have the anti-lock braking system (ABS). But in the moment of panic, I forgot all that. I developed amnesia at 75 mph.

Not having the ABS, my car hydroplaned, spun across the highway to the outside lane, and hit the guardrail. It finally stopped in the middle of Interstate 5, with two semis zooming past me.

Since I could still start my car, I drove it to the side of the road. Then I stood in the pouring rain trying to flag down someone for help. No one stopped. Now, you've probably been noticing the dumb mistakes I had made so far, but get ready. The next one is a doozy.

I drove my car to the nearest exit, hoping I could find a service station. It was still raining, and by now, my windows had fogged up. Even my glasses were misty. I took what I thought was the next exit, but soon found out that it wasn't. It was a ditch, which I drove right into. Now I had a car in the ditch, and it was still pouring. I finally walked to a service station and got the help I needed.

Driving classes teach us to check the weather, obey speed limits and drive defensively. I ignored all those lessons. But I learned three more important ones: negligence can get you in trouble, inattention can get you in trouble, and stupidity will certainly get you in trouble.

AO3(AW) Hector Avendano
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## Left-Right-Left

My son, an infantry staff sergeant in the Army assigned to Pusan, Korea, had to have his toenail removed. Since he couldn't run, he decided to maintain his fitness by riding his bicycle four miles off base (probably at warp-5 speed). When he entered an intersection, he checked his left, checked his right, and went ahead. He and the car on the left (contrary to the laws of physics) tried to occupy the same space at the same time. The result: major leg repair in Seoul, full-leg cast, laid-up six to eight weeks.

He proved to me that there are no new lessons, only old ones relearned. Back in 1977, I was working at the police department at NAS Alameda, in San Francisco, when I took a defensive driving course sponsored by the Alameda County Sheriff's Office. Part of the lessons learned was to look for the other guy. Today, they call that situational-awareness training. The lesson they taught was that when we entered an intersection, we should look to our left, look to our right, and look to our left again. We check the left lane twice because it's the closest cross-traffic lane to you.

My moral? We learn a lot of things that we shouldn't keep to ourselves. The training we get in the military is valuable. Pass it on to your family. You'll never know when they may need it.

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## We Don't Talk Enough

Before entering the Navy, I worked for a company that manufactured the molds from which automobile body panels were formed.

A guy named Rich and I were working on a mold for a quarter panel for a Lincoln Continental. This mold was about 4 feet high, 5 feet long, and sat on a 3-foot high table. Rich was on one side of the table, and I was on the other while we were assembling the mold. Rich would hold a piece of the mold in place, and I would drill the pilot hole through a fiberglass panel and halfway through a mahogany one. Then I would drive in a screw with my cordless drill.

The mold was almost complete, except for a few loose pieces. I started drilling a pilot hole when, suddenly, I saw the wood part of the mold fly across the room. Rich grabbed his hand and cried out, "You drilled into my hand!"

The 10-x-1/8-inch-diameter bit had gone halfway through Rich's hand. Surprisingly, there was little blood. That's because the bit was so hot from drilling through 3 inches of fiberglass that it had cauterized the wound.

Two things could have prevented this from happening. First, I should have told Rich I was getting ready to drill. Second, I should have made sure Rich was bracing the loose piece with a wood block instead of his hand. Rich has a permanent scar on his hand as a reminder.

But he's not the only one who remembers this incident. I often think about Rich and about how something as simple as talking to one another could have prevented that mishap. Communication is important if we want to keep our ships afloat, our airplanes flying, and our buddies and ourselves whole.

AMS2 Paul Winch
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## Who Put That Tree in My Way?

It was Sunday—not a lot to do—so my wife and I decided to go dirt-bike riding. After a couple of phone calls to line up some riding partners, we loaded up our motorcycles and were on our way. All of us arrived about the same time at a new place we had found the day before. It was not my favorite place to ride, but it was late in the afternoon, and we didn't have time to go elsewhere. At least I'd get to ride, and that was all I cared about at that point.

We had been riding for two hours when I took a break and was talking to my wife and one of my friends. I decided to go for another lap and told them I'd be right back.

I was making my way around the makeshift track when it happened. I don't really remember what "it" was. One minute I was riding, and the next thing I remember was being in the truck on the way to the emergency room. There, doctors gave me 17 stitches to put my lip back together and reconnect my nose, and put a brace on my right knee.

My friends and wife said I had hit a tree. A week or two later, I went back to the site to look at the tree I hit. I was amazed when I saw it. Three feet of bark had been stripped from the tree, and there were perfect indentations where my helmet visor and mouthpiece hit the trunk.

Even with my safety gear (full-face helmet), I was hurt pretty bad. Three months later, my lip is healed, but I'm still having physical therapy for my knee. However, I'm sure that if I didn't have that helmet on, I wouldn't be telling you this story.

AME2 (AW) Joseph M. Laney
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## The Shock of Reveille

After a longer-than-normal, mid-check shift on Friday night at his squadron, an ATAA hit the rack in his barracks room. Early the next morning, when it was still dark outside, his roommate's alarm went off. After yelling to his roommate to turn off the alarm, the irritated ATAA grabbed the clock radio and threw it across the room.

Several hours later, he woke up and rolled out of bed. When he hit the floor, he was jolted backward into the metal frame of the bed, where he was "buzzed" for what seemed like an eternity until he finally fell forward. Dazed and wondering what had happened, he stumbled to the light switch and turned it on.

That's when he saw the burns on his hand and foot from the frayed electric cord of the radio. When he had jerked the radio out of the wall, instead of the plug being pulled out of the socket, the cord had pulled out of the radio. When he rolled onto it, the cord had zapped him with 115 volts of electricity.

On Monday, when the ATAA went back to work, he told his LPO about this incident. His savvy LPO made him see a doctor immediately. He knew that an electrical shock can cause someone's heart to beat irregularly for up to 48 hours after the initial shock. Fortunately, the ATAA didn't suffer any such problems.

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